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Letter dated 11 February 2004 from the Permanent Representative of Portugal to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to attach a letter on Timor-Leste, dated 2 February 2004, sent by Jorge Sampaio, President of the Republic of Portugal, to the Secretary-General.

We kindly request that the present letter and its annex be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Gonçalo **Santa-Clara Gomes**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Portugal
to the United Nations

04-23912 (E) 120204

Annex to the letter dated 11 February 2004 from the Permanent Representative of Portugal to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I am writing to you concerning East Timor, an issue we have had the occasion to discuss several times during recent years, both before and after East Timor independence. I especially recall our conversation in New York last September, when we discussed the United Nations presence in the country.

East Timor has been a remarkable success story for the United Nations. The work that the United Nations has been undertaking in East Timor in recent years, as well as your personal commitment to this issue, should be commended by us all. However, it is my understanding that our collective task has yet to be completed.

In spite of the impressive progress achieved by East Timor, in such a short period of time, substantial engagement and support of the international community will still be needed to ensure stability and security in the new State.

We share the assessment of the East Timorese Government concerning its own limitations in coping with internal and external security problems. This was brought to my attention by Timorese political leaders and was conveyed in Dili to the recent United Nations evaluation mission. In fact, threats to the internal stability of East Timor can be expected to continue beyond May 2004, and we do know that Timorese defence and security forces are still quite vulnerable and clearly are not able to respond effectively to any major disturbance. In our view, even relatively low levels of destabilization could have a significant impact on and consequences for stability in East Timor.

In this regard, we believe it is important that the international community, in particular the Security Council, maintain its interest and engagement in this country, providing the necessary sense of continuity until East Timor can manage those threats by itself.

Under these circumstances, both the Portuguese Government and I strongly favour that the post-UNMISET United Nations presence in East Timor continue to include a military force. Like the Timorese authorities, we are convinced that one international battalion will still be needed to maintain a sufficient deterrent. We would be available to participate in this common effort.

I am confident that an expression of your opinion favouring the inclusion of a military component in the future United Nations presence in East Timor would be duly weighed by the members of the Security Council.